

Community Service News

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CORRESPONDENCE

I am very much interested indeed in "The Community Versus Political Parties" on pp. 99 ff. of the September C.S. News. This is one of my own great hobbies, and I have quite a bibliography to which I will add this title.

—Richmond P. Miller, Philadelphia
Yearly Meeting of Friends.

The thing that impresses us most is the article entitled "The Community Versus Political Parties." The author is not given, but that article is of enormous importance, and it should be distributed widely and discussed by all groups and all individuals who have some slight interest in almost any kind of constructive organization, and especially organization the purpose of

which is to make life a little less difficult.

We learned the lesson that is presented in that article back in the Llano Colony days when we abolished the General Assembly. Quite a book could be written about that but the book probably will not be written. When we set up United Cooperative Industries, we adopted what we called the informal conference, and completely discarded the clumsy discord breeder, namely Roberts' Rules.

I think that more honest efforts have been wrecked by Roberts' Rules than any one other thing, but the "Parliamentarians" insisted that we were all wrong and that we were "dictators" etc., etc.

—Walter Millsap, Los Angeles

MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Oct. 17-22. Thirtieth Annual Convention, Natl. Catholic Rural Life Conference, Hotel Bancroft, Saginaw, Mich. Talks and discussions on rural education, young people, migrant laborers, recreation, etc.

Oct. 20-23. Annual Conference, Adult Education Assn., Mich. State College, East Lansing, Mich.

Oct. 20-24. Am. Public Health Assn., Cleveland, Ohio.

Oct. 29-31. Natl. Town and Country Con-

vocation, National Council of Churches, Deshler-Wallick Hotel, Columbus, O.; for information write 35 W. Gay St., Columbus.

Nov. 17-19. National Municipal League, annual conference, San Antonio, Texas.

Dec. 14-19. Sixth Internatl. Conf. of Social Work, Madras, India. Theme "The Role of Social Service in Raising the Standard of Living."

Feb. 19-21. Annual conference. Council of Southern Mountain Workers, Berea, Ky.

Community Service News, issued bimonthly except July and August by Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio. \$2.00 per year, two years \$3.00. Griscom Morgan, editor.

Community Service, Inc., is an organization to promote the interests of the community as a basic social institution, concerned with the economic, recreational, educational, cultural and spiritual development of its members. Community Service was incorporated in 1940 as a non-profit organization to supply information and service for small communities and their leaders, in the belief that the decay of the American community constitutes a crisis which calls for steady and creative effort. The nation-wide interest expressed during the succeeding years has reinforced this opinion.

THE SMALL COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

Educators and sociologists are now awakening to the educational role of the community. They have not as yet arrived at a consensus on what is a sociological community within which schools and school districts shall be integrated.

The most authoritative study on school reorganization is that of the National Commission on School District Reorganization, entitled *Your School District*.^{*} In general philosophy and outlook this study gives sound recognition to the educational role of the community and the relation between the community and the school. But with regard to size of school district and of school the study carries over with but little modification the general conclusions and approach that had been established before the more recent awakening to the role of the community. The hazard of too large units is recognized in various ways, as in the statement: "If the local administrative unit is made large enough to provide all of the various elements of a desirable educational program there is grave danger that the school organization will be so far removed from the normal processes of community living that people will not participate effectively in the formulation of educational policy or in the control of the schools."

The National Commission believes that an intermediate size of school district would offset the hazard of state domination of smaller, less adequate schools. Consequently, the numbers of people the Commission would still have in school districts, and the numbers of children they would have in each school, may far exceed what is a maximum sociological community. The result may be neither fish nor fowl, neither community nor administratively what is efficient. These educators are still bound by the findings of some statistical studies of financial and organizational efficiency of different sizes of schools and school districts, and by their assumption that each school district must provide within itself a fairly complete range of professional services.

The move of state departments of education to consolidate schools and school districts, ignoring sociological criteria of a satisfactory school system, has led to increasing resistance and questioning, not only on the part of the public, but also on the part of sociologists and educators aware of the values and issues at stake. One of the first occasions on which this concern

^{*}Published by the Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1948, 286 pages, \$2.00).

has achieved clearly formulated expression in a prominent professional journal is the publication of two articles on the subject in the June, 1952, issue of *Rural Sociology*.

David Lindstrom, of the University of Illinois, relates how in six years' time school district reorganization in Illinois had decreased the number of districts by about 70 percent, mostly through displacing one-room schools. Since Illinois law allows rural people to determine the size of their district, David Lindstrom observes:

Rural people, when given a choice, tend more often to prefer the natural rural community than do most educators. The rural sociologist would probably favor the community unit district rather than the larger size recommended by educators. Data from Illinois are illustrative. . . . The median high school enrollment [chosen by the people for their organization] is in the size group of 126 to 150 people.

A rural community school district providing a high school of 150 pupils falls considerably short of the standards set by Dawson, Reeves and associates. [In the book *Your School District*] . . . Dawson's minimum community would require a total community population of over 3000, and his optimum one a population of 26,000. Half or more of the Illinois [reorganized] districts are considerably below the minimum in population.

According to studies under the direction of Carl C. Taylor, comparing 114 communities in various parts of the United States, the communities having high or relatively high group consciousness or feeling of belonging on the part of the farmers have trade centers with populations ranging from 1000 to 3500. This raises the question of whether the educators have set their standards too high.

J. F. Thaden, of Michigan State College, in the second article discusses the complexity of the issues at stake, and suggests that a satisfactory sociological community should have a complete set of community services, most essentially a doctor, a dentist, a newspaper, a bank, a motion picture theatre and an accredited high school. He believes that where these services are present a balance of other services will be also present, such as the post office, restaurant, garage, etc. Mr. Thaden feels that these criteria are generally not met in places with less than 1000 inhabitants. To hold to a rule of such a complete set of services may withdraw vitality and distinctive culture from some of our most valuable small (or sociological) communities with less than a thousand inhabitants.

The temper and practice of state school administrators has commonly been adverse to primary-group communities concerned with keeping their

own school systems. For example, the Ohio Farm Bureau now has as part of its legislative program the work of resisting the Ohio State Department of Education in its effort to consolidate schools. The attitude which Ohio farmers are opposing is typified by a statement on principles of school reorganization by D. H. Sutton of the Ohio State Department of Education, in a 17-year-old bulletin of the U.S. Bureau of Education.

Education is now and always has been regarded as the proper function of the state. . . . It cannot be argued that school districts possess any inherent rights or prerogatives. . . . Of course, in the reorganization of school districts, the control exercised by the State is limited by reason of the type and kind of coercion it is able to apply in developing a school finance program.

Because the children's educational and the state's financial interest are identified with the establishment of very large enrollments per school and per school district, county and state departments of education justify coercion of the community with such statements as Mr. Sutton's:

Whenever the patrons of a school district deny educational opportunities to the children merely because of presumed pride in having a school building, drastic action should be taken by the State.

The number of children the state desires in a primary school may soon be found to be considerably in excess of the size of school that is favorable for child development, as well as more children than the small community can muster. Standards of elementary school attendance set by educational authorities range between 25 and 40 enrolled pupils per teacher, each class limited to one year of age range, and a minimum of 300 pupils per school.

It is debatable whether large elementary schools are really necessary from the standpoint of economy. The principle argument for large schools is based upon statistical comparisons of operating costs per student of various sizes of schools. These figures may be biased by the fact that state aid has been devoted to the economy of large schools. An experimental project at Antioch College appears to show that a school with pupil enrollment of sixty children can be as economical in building cost and operation as the large schools, and educationally superior. This project suggests that one teacher can effectively teach two age groups rather than classes of only one-year range of age, if the class is not too large. The age range within this kind of class takes advantage of children's capacity to learn from older age groups and allows freedom for their great individual differences of talent and development.

Many of the special services for which we congregate hundreds of children in large schools by long bus routes could more economically and desirably be carried to the small school. Modern technology and electronics bid fair to make much educational decentralization feasible. Also school districts might organize or federate regionally to secure services which it has been assumed would require one large district to supply.

There is no doubt but that small community schools are commonly ill-financed, poorly staffed, and educationally narrow and inadequate, just as there is no doubt that many large city schools are deforming, impersonal monstrosities requiring policemen to maintain a semblance of order. It is equally certain that moderately small schools well integrated in healthy communities can be among the nation's best. The disintegrating community may need, and be willing, to relinquish its school to a larger mass undertaking. But the more self-conscious small community, able to master its circumstances, should be helped to maintain and develop an excellent school system rather than be coerced, by such power as educational authorities can bring to bear, into relinquishing its children into the common mold of the impersonal large mass-production consolidated school and school district.

The creative future of the nation depends upon independence and creativity in its growing generations, both of individuals and of small communities. Yet, as a great teacher once said, "You do your level best by education to eradicate this seed of creativity. You run all your personalities through one machine and mold them in one mold. Plastic, pliable little minds and spirits, you twist to fit a standardized education. Some of these children receive scars and strains so that, when the fight has become too fierce, they break down, and then you incarcerate these gifted sensitive people in asylums for the insane."

Educators have hoped that better professional training and a more abundant staff of educational specialists, psychiatrists and the like are the answer to the child's individual needs.

To depend on a large aggregate of children to support a large variety of professional and educational services defeats the purpose of serving the distinctive individual needs of the child, defeats the creative individuality of distinctive small communities, and increases the pathology requiring special services.

Studies need to be made of how to achieve varied educational services and good school personnel and administration without sacrifice of small community values. Valuable work has been done in this field, some of it reported in the 1945 N.E.A. Yearbook, *Rural Schools for Tomorrow*. But in general the field has been largely neglected.

THE NEWSPAPER AS COMMUNITY PROJECT*

On an October morning in 1946 the people who stopped at the post office in a certain Ohio village found in their mailboxes a small mimeographed bulletin addressed "Boxholder"; on the same morning all the families on the rural routes received the same piece of mail. There was nothing dramatic about the little circular. It might easily have been mistaken for advertising or for a pre-election, vote-for-me message. Many copies doubtless reached the wastebaskets of the township unread, and even the citizens who read it through may not have given its contents a second thought. Yet the distribution of this unassuming little folder marked the beginning of an experiment in democratic action on the community level. It was the first issue of a home talent newspaper dedicated to better community citizenship.

One year later *Township Topics* printed the following descriptive verse in its first anniversary issue:

It's the Party Line	Twelve times we've dug up township news
The Town Grapevine	Twelve times we've put it down
Community Loudspeaker	Twelve times we've licked eight hundred stamps
Broadcasting News	And mailed it through the town.
Citizen's Soapbox	Twelve times reported jobs well done
For airing of views	And civic headaches, too,
Neighborhood bureau	And advertised the bargains
Of straight Information	Local merchants have for you.
Sometimes a bureau	
Of Investigation.	

This project, officially sponsored by two cooperating civic groups, the Community Men's Club and the School Mothers' Club, and financed by advertising from local business people, had thus brought to about eight hundred families authentic news about events and issues of community-wide interest. It was reported that village children had been heard to bring an argument to an abrupt close with the statement, "It *is so*. It said so in *Township Topics*."

Two volunteer editors, one from each of the sponsoring organizations, together with a dozen or more helpers who have assisted with special assignments, have tried to include in the paper both information and inspiration. Out of the headlines—random pieces of the community jigsaw puzzle—can be constructed a candid picture of life in a small American community. The citizen, as he scans his *Topics*, finds such items as the following:

*Reprinted from *The Journal of Education* (8 Beacon St., Boston), Vol. 132, No. 3 (March 1949).

Reports of action taken by township trustees, school board, Men's Club, Mothers' Club; school news and announcements; notices from the public library; a calendar of coming events; summary of a recreation survey conducted in the high school; discussion of public issues such as strip-mining, soil conservation, zoning; statements from candidates for local offices; items of township history; letters to the editor; thoughts concerning the religious life of the community; stories of what other progressive communities are doing; reports of conferences and institutes dealing with small community problems. The long and varied list includes success stories, such as the co-operative effort which brought the community its library, but it includes also such evidence of failure as the sad little headline, "Community Chorus Fails through Lack of Support."

There are many publications devoted to furthering the interests of special community groups—the church, the school, farm organizations, and others—but this one is focused on the community *as a whole*. E. B. White reports that one misplaced letter in a news dispatch caused the United Nations to become the Untied Nations. Many a small community is indeed an *untied* community. Assorted organizations carry on separate and sovereign programs which often conflict and compete with one another. The need for some kind of uniting bond is urgent. *Township Topics* is an attempt to meet this need.

The school can easily become another such uniting force. In most rural communities all roads lead to the schoolhouse. It commands the interest and the support of more people than any other single community institution. As the one-room school served an earlier generation as social center, so the modern rural school can serve its larger area as a community center and as a coordinating agency concerned with education, recreation, and all phases of the community life of the people. A good school helps to produce a good community. A good community makes possible a good school. School and community are partners in the task of teaching personal values and the ideals of cooperative group living. Separated they become ineffective; united they reinforce and strengthen one another. . . . While in the community described the experiment was carried on outside the school by adults, in others it might well be carried on in cooperation with the school.

A cooperative project of this kind does not have all smooth sailing. It may snag on financial rocks. Volunteer workers may find they cannot continue to spend the necessary time or may decide that the results do not justify the effort. The life of a small community is a continued story which proceeds at a leisurely pace, but the events in today's installment may have unforeseen consequences in future chapters. It is in that faith that one small community group tried an experimental newspaper. It is in that faith that all education carries on.

ROOT CAUSES OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION

When a man is killed suddenly and unexpectedly, as by a stray bullet, it is said, "He never knew what hit him." Somewhat the same has been true in the past of societies that, after having achieved a peak of power and culture, quickly faded away. The major causes of decline seldom have been clear to the culture that has been experiencing it. The imputed reasons are usually symptoms rather than root causes. With the gradual emergence of the social sciences there is an increasing tendency to make critical and penetrating inquiry into causes.

This tendency to look into causes is illustrated by an article in the *New York Times Magazine* for August 10, on "Corruption Runs Far Deeper Than Politics," by Marshall B. Clinard, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin. The following extracts from that article indicate Professor Clinard's analysis of the causes of declining ethical standards, and of the most promising way of recovery:

There is a present-day pattern in our society of dishonesty, illegal advantage, loss of integrity and moral indifference. It is unfortunate that the problem of corruption is so often identified exclusively with politics and politicians. Actually it has no such specific connection. The state of affairs is much more general and serious, for not only can politics and government be "corrupt" but also business, labor, the professions, and even the general public.

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Dr. H. H. Wilson declares: "The political morality reflects, rather than shapes, the society in which it operates. More pertinently, it is naïve in the extreme to expect from politicians a far different ethical standard from that which prevails throughout the country. Indeed, were today's politicians to adopt such a standard they would almost certainly be rejected by the voters as idealists, dreamers, crackpots or visionaries."

What are some of the factors which lie behind what appears to be an increasing breakdown of ethics and integrity in our society? Chief among them has been the widespread, rapid development of urban ways of life which are changing our hitherto predominantly rural country. These urban ways include extensive physical and mental mobility, impersonality in relations with others, excessive individualism and materialism and pronounced differences over fundamental values.

To understand corruption one must recognize the role that our extensive mobility plays in breaking personal ties and producing value conflicts. During the period from 1947 to 1950 one out of five of the population changed residences. Earlier, between 1940 and 1947 some 70,000,000 persons, exclusive of the armed forces, settled in different homes or different parts

of the country. This was approximately one half the people of the United States.

Now mobility has many effects which are by no means beneficial. Close relations with relatives and neighbors are broken, so that one's family and personal reputation comes to have less importance. One is thrown into contact with large numbers of strangers who mean little personally to one. (This is particularly the case in Washington, as in many of our other large cities.) Finally, mobile individuals are often exposed to modes of conduct which might not have been acceptable to them in their former locality.

Extensive mobility and impersonality, therefore, have meant that contemporary individuals have increasingly tended to regard their own interests as paramount.

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What is needed to deal effectively with corruption in our society is the devising of ways to encourage greater citizen participation in neighborhood, community and welfare activities. We need to substitute more social for personal objectives and to find satisfactions in life that are not based so extensively on merely the possession of material goods. In this regard many educators have rightly criticized the excessive competition, rather than co-operation, that is encouraged in our contemporary school system with its emphasis on grades and other marks of individual distinction.

SUBURB VS. COMMUNITY

To many people who do not like big city living, the suburb is an adequate answer. Suburbs vary greatly. Some of the new "planned communities"—that is, planned by real estate developers—do not fulfill all desires. The following is from an article in *The Reporter* for August 19, 1952, describing the new development of Levittown on Long Island, thirty-seven miles from New York:

It is too early to tell what is to become of Levittown. The population is still too fluid. At present, ten per cent of the Levitt houses change hands each year, and I would guess that a majority of the residents are always hoping to move to better quarters. Those who move in, it seems, are as transient-minded as those they replace. This does not augur well for such permanent improvements as school construction.

"This is a young community," says Dave Barnum. "It's young, five years old, and it's going no place. We are, but Levittown isn't. They call these 'dormitory communities' out here, because they are mostly places for people to sleep in who work pretty far away. Well, Levittown is like a bed in a third-rate hotel; nobody's going to make it when we leave." As soon as he gets enough money together, Dave's going to move away.

As is commonly the case with new real estate developments, most of the families are young—so new, in fact, that the average age of the population is said to be under seven years. Levittown is an example of freak communities which spring up in the rapidly shifting mobility of America.

Writing in *The American City* for August, 1952, John D. Garwood reports on 116 business firms which recently have moved to small towns in Colorado. The following are some of his comments.

Colorado attracts some firms because of the attractiveness of the cities in the state, and secondly, because some enterprisers like the "not too large, yet not too small" cities on the eastern slope of the Colorado Rockies. . . .

One president of a company that moved to Colorado from New York said, "We like the small town. We like the informality of Main Street and the idea that home is only a few blocks' ride from the office. . . ."

A firm which might attract no attention in a larger community may find itself regarded as a very important establishment in a smaller municipality. . . . One new Colorado firm, which employs about 90 workers, is located in a small city in the central part of the state where the firm is one of the five largest employers in town. . . . The vice president of the company commented, "The whole town is interested in what we do. If we want an additional bus in the morning, we get it. Members of our company are in different civic organizations. If we were located in Los Angeles we would never be heard of."

An official of a new publishing company that located in Colorado commented in a similar vein. This company has an annual printing bill of between \$150,000 and \$200,000. The editor of the firm was pleased with the type of service rendered his company by local printers. "On the West Coast this printing bill might be small potatoes to a lot of printing companies. To our printer in Colorado we are the big account. We get the best service from him in every way, and some extras besides."

The decentralization of industry in this country is being carried on at a rate of which the average citizen is unaware. The small city has a great deal to offer a migrant firm which is not strongly oriented to materials or markets. Life is carried on at a more even pace, with a resultant lower labor turnover. New firms in Colorado have found rural labor exceptionally adaptable. More people own their own homes and automobiles in the smaller community. A reduction in property tax rates and insurance rates may be expected in the rural area.

IS URBAN INTELLIGENCE DECLINING?

England is one of the most urbanized countries. For several years we have been reading the opinions of British psychologists to the effect that, due to the adverse selection taking place in the population, the average intelligence of the British people is steadily declining. A specific estimate which has often been repeated is to the effect that the intelligence quotient of the British people is falling about 2 points in each generation.

In the *American Sociological Review* for August, 1952, Otis Dudley Duncan of the University of Chicago takes issue with this view. To begin with, Professor Duncan indicates the prevalence of the view which he combats, in a statement of which the following is typical:

In his recently published book, *Human Fertility: The Modern Dilemma*, Robert C. Cook calls our attention to an alarming situation:

"Competent scholars . . . are agreed that today's differential birth rate makes a decline in intelligence inevitable.

"(The 1949 report of the Royal Commission on Population) concluded that the average intelligence quotient of the British people was declining about 2 points every generation. The same pattern exists in the United States, where the experts consider a similar decline to be a 'moral certainty.' If this trend continues for less than a century, England and America will be well on the way to becoming nations of near half-wits."

Mr. Cook is a competent geneticist and the editor of the *Journal of Heredity*. His book appears with the endorsement of the well-known biologist, Julian Huxley. His statements on this question are buttressed by references to an extensive literature built up by outstanding psychologists and biological scientists.

In controverting this general viewpoint Duncan brings into question the validity of intelligence tests as measurements of genetic quality, holding, as some other critics have done, that intelligence ratings measure chiefly differences in social and economic opportunity. The fact that people with higher I.Q. ratings have fewer children to him means that it is preferred social and economic position which is being eliminated, rather than inborn potential intelligence.

Another argument which is implied, but not too clearly stated, is that in any biological line there is a normal range of distribution of any quality, and that such normal range of variation is independent of selection. For instance, in a pure strain of the one-celled animal, paramecium, the several offspring in any generation will vary markedly in size. If, in a family of paramecia the largest is selected and for several generations the largest

is always selected and bred; while also the smallest of the original family is also selected and bred for several generations, with always the smallest selected for breeding—at the end of several generations there will be no difference in the average size of the two strains. In each generation there will be a considerable range of size between the largest and the smallest offspring, but the range of size and the average size will be the same regardless of whether the breeding in each generation has been from the largest or from the smallest individual. So, it seems to be argued, even if the more intelligent persons in each generation should have fewer children than the less intelligent, the average range of intelligence through the generations would remain about the same.

Another count which the author has against the theory of declining intelligence can best be expressed in his own words:

Fourth on the list of qualifications entered against this theory, and of probably greater consequence than any mentioned yet, is the unacceptability of certain seeming corollaries. Psychologists generally believe that intelligence is positively related to other "desirable" traits—vitality, personality, beauty, etc. But if our I.Q. genes are "eroding," must we also suppose that dysgenic trends are lowering our capacity for health, reducing the proportion of the physically attractive, and generally debilitating the human organism? Such a conclusion is not generally drawn, but seems to be logically implied.

Where no conclusive research data are available one may be justified in referring to general observation. I have visited a considerable number of the clubs sustained by markedly successful business men in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and elsewhere. Nothing is more striking in these places than the marked physical superiority of the men who frequent them. In bodily structure, virility, and fineness of features these men are far and away beyond the average of the men on the street. High intelligence does seem to be commonly related to excellence in other qualities. Yet it is just these successful men, according to statistical studies, who have small families. Recently in England I visited the "Banbury Fair," a sort of country fair, held in Banbury Street, under the walls of Oxford University. The fair was patronized mostly by the lower social and economic classes. In physical appearance these people were very markedly inferior to the educated and successful people of Oxford. These two instances might be indefinitely extended.

The author makes a comparison between intelligence and longevity, intimating that if intelligence is declining we should expect length of life to be declining also. This is a weak argument. Length of life is increased by modern technology, quite regardless of increases or decrease

of average physical fitness. More than a third of elderly men can have life expectancy substantially increased by an operation which is nearly always successful now, whereas thirty-five years ago it was a desperate risk. Pneumonia used to be one of the chief causes of death among the aged. With modern drugs, deaths from that cause are disappearing. Inborn vitality might be declining, and yet the length of life might be increasing.

Similarly the author draws attention to the fact that children are growing larger, whereas if quality is declining we should expect them to be growing smaller. Here again such factors as improved food, and general increase in hygiene, probably make the difference.

The author draws attention to what he holds to be inaccurate interpretation of data, and to very serious gaps in our information, which call for further research. We do not feel that his conclusion will go unchallenged. It is:

This paper holds the hypothesis of declining intelligence to be untenable—and the “modern dilemma” in that respect to be most unfortunately misstated.

Neither can we fully share his feeling of relative importance of issues when he writes:

The sociologist may well share the concern for population quality of the psychologist and the geneticist, but yet feel sure that the more important problems at the present time lie in the known wastage of available ability, rather than in the hypothetical loss of potential ability.

If our present social structure is in fact selecting from the general population the more intelligent, the more vigorous, the more purposeful, and the more generally gifted, and is putting them into urban environments where their kinds of people have fewer children than do the people without those superior qualities, then this adverse selection may be one of the controlling factors in our destiny.

It is not only genetic quality that is being lost. Much of the best of our cultural inheritance is preserved and transmitted by a fraction of the population which for various reasons has inherited exceptional cultural values. Even though genetic quality were not being reduced, if the cultural inheritance of integrity, thrift, foresight, purposefulness and industry are being eroded by excessive urbanization and related conditions, the loss may be only slightly less serious than though it were genetic.

There is strong tendency for men of strong concern to become uncritical zealots. That has been the case in the field with which Professor Duncan

deals. He does well to call such zealotry to account, and to deflate it. Especially he has done well to indicate the nature of research which would throw most light on the subject.

Professor Duncan's general conclusion is shared by Frederick Osborn in his *Preface to Eugenics*:

In the light of recent studies which are more scientific than any available in the past, social class differentials in births do not appear so disturbing from the eugenic point of view, though they may seriously retard cultural advance. The present author fails to view their eugenic aspects with alarm.

REVIEWS

An Experiment in the Prevention of Delinquency, by Edwin Powers and Helen Witmer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951, 649 pages, \$6.00).

Dr. Richard Cabot had an idea that delinquent boys, if taken young enough, could be turned to normal living if each one could have a friend and counselor who would stand by him as companion and "big brother," and would supply an example of character. He set up and endowed what was intended to be a ten years' study project to try out this idea. Six hundred and fifty boys of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and adjoining Somerville, from seven to twelve years old, who were delinquents or probable delinquents, were divided into two groups, half of them to be provided with personal counselors, and the other half to be left to the usual course of events, with the help of the usually somewhat impersonal social agencies. The book is a report of that study, which extended through about eight years.

The report gives the impression of being an honest account of an honest, objective inquiry, which is what one would expect of any project set up by Richard Cabot. The results in general did not sustain the hypothesis of the study. The boys for whom counselors were supplied did not turn out much better than those in the control group who had none. Nevertheless the report throws light on many theories concerning social work, and is very worthwhile reading.

If this reviewer were to make his own appraisal of the findings, the gist of it would be that if many elements of a living situation are bad, the correction of any single one of them seldom will be enough to save the day. A considerable proportion of the boys in the study had miserable homes, often dirty and slovenly, with quarrelsome parents, many of whom were drunken, unthrifty, and often more or less antisocial or criminal. The neighborhood environment and the boys' gangs often were similarly unfortunate. To expect a friendly counselor, even by frequent association, to neutralize

such a life setting, would be over-optimism.

The general conclusion was reached by the study that the most potent element in a boy's environment is the relation of the parents to each other and to the children. If there is lack of affection and mutual respect between parents, seldom can this lack be compensated for. A well-adjusted family in a good community setting would seem to be the best prescription for normal and well-adjusted children. Gordon W. Allport wisely summed up this conclusion in his foreword:

"All sources of moral ideals pale in comparison with parental influence. Children absorb both their ethical and their religious ideals from parents wherever a basis for emotional identification with the parent exists. If this basis for identification is lacking, or if the parent himself is an antisocial model, the child can rarely become a good citizen. If I am interpreting the evidence aright, all causes of delinquency, other than parental attitude, fade in importance. . . .

"Parents are the very ground of their lives. Grounds, psychologists know, are seldom perceived unless the individual is trained to look at them."

One interesting and significant finding was that both in the study group and in the control group a large part of the boys for whom delinquency was predicted by experienced social workers did not develop such action. As Allport puts it: "The young people involved in this study turn out considerably better than experts had predicted. Both the teachers and the 'selection committee' grossly overpredicted potential delinquency. . . . The moral, I think, is, Don't expect the worst to happen to your problem children; it probably won't."

One of the most significant findings of this book, one which is true also of many other fields, is the clear evidence that the warmth, sympathy and friendliness of the counselors or social service workers is the important consideration. The extent of professional training and experience did not appear nearly so important as the social work profession has assumed.

Social Dynamics: Principles and Cases in Introductory Sociology, by Joseph B. Gittler (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1952, 346 pages, \$4.00).

We learn by cases and illustrations. This well known truth is used by the author to present some standard sociological concepts. In some fields the illustrative cases are extreme and spectacular, rather than representative.

In the field of the primary-group community, after a brief introductory statement, two cases are presented—a story of the Andaman Island culture and a description of the Amish in Pennsylvania. Both these cases are familiar to readers in the field of rural sociology. As an introduction to sociology the book is informative, rather than a stimulus to inquiry.